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Thursday, 18 January 2001, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Jayakumar	(Singapore)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Cooney
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Toure
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Holbrooke

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999).

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01-21740 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Sweden and Yugoslavia in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Mladenović (Yugoslavia) took a seat at the Council table and Mr. Schori (Sweden) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Guéhenno to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I call on Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Guéhenno (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure for me to give members of the Security Council an update on developments in Kosovo since the previous briefing in mid-December. Before I begin my briefing, I should like to remind the Council that Mr. Kouchner has now left Pristina, and his successor, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Hans Haekkerup, has taken up his post. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Kouchner, who, with the great ability, dedication and energy for which he is known, mobilized people in very difficult circumstances to establish the interim administration in Kosovo in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

I should first like to speak about the joint interim administrative institutions. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has continued its work to create inclusive local administrative structures. To ensure that there is a political foundation for this work, the outgoing Special Representative reminded Kosovo's residents that they are responsible for building a tolerant society. He called on Kosovo's political leaders to use their influence to reject intolerance and put an end to extremism, and he stressed that Kosovo Albanians risk squandering much of the goodwill of the international community unless they stop ethnically motivated killings and political violence in general.

The Kosovo Transitional Council (KTC) has been enlarged, and further enlargement is planned to make it as representative as possible of all of the political, religious and ethnic communities of Kosovo. Three new members participated in the KTC meeting on 10 January, one from the Party of the Liberal Centre, one from the Bosniac Party of Democratic Action of Kosovo and one from the Democratic Party of Albanian Ashkalija in Kosovo. These parties draw their political support from different minority communities, including the Kosovo Bosniacs, the Ashkalija and the Gorani, respectively. The Interim Administrative Council — the IAC — structure has yet to be reformed. Other changes will take into account the results of the 28 October municipal elections, which enabled the United Nations Mission to gauge more precisely the popularity of the various political parties on a Kosovo-wide basis.

The Special Representative chaired the two meetings of the Council of Joint Interim Administrative Structure Co-Heads. The main objective of the Council is to increase cooperation between the various administrative departments.

On 10 January, the first meeting of the UNMIK working group on the legal and institutional framework for Kosovo-wide elections was held. It was attended by Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb experts designated

by the IAC. It focused mainly on proposals for the functions and composition of a provisional assembly and on an appropriate electoral formula for the Kosovo-wide elections. The date for those elections will be set once the legal framework has been developed by the Special Representative.

The Assemblies in the 27 municipalities where the election results were certified are now fully established. The three committees — dealing with policy, finance, and communities and mediation — have been established in 12 Assemblies. In eight others, the process of setting up these committees is under way. However, the process of setting up the municipal administrations has been complicated in some municipalities by the deliberate politicization of the process for selecting high-level municipality officials by the two major Kosovo Albanian political parties. This has partially undermined UNMIK's effort to develop effective democratic municipal assemblies.

In the three Kosovo municipalities where Serbs constitute the majority, Serb representatives have been appointed to the Assemblies by the Special Representative. However, the inclusion of Kosovo Serbs in Assemblies in areas where Serbs are not in the majority remains a problem. The Special Representative has met with representatives of the Kosovo Serb community. Negotiations have been complicated, however, by demands from some Kosovo Serb leaders that their communities be allowed to set up their own distinct municipal structures, separate and distinct from the elected Assemblies. This was rejected by UNMIK as being contrary to resolution 1244 (1999).

I should like to say a few words about the Gracanica Assembly. On 30 December, the Serb National Council-Gracanica held its year-end meeting. The Gracanica Assembly reaffirmed its willingness to participate in all of UNMIK's Kosovo-wide institutions, while at the same time strongly criticizing Belgrade-based Serb leaders and their representatives in Kosovo who continued their policy of non-cooperation with UNMIK. The Gracanica Assembly expressed concern over respect for the law and the effective setting up of law-enforcement procedures, as well as recent Kosovo sales of property belonging to Serbs, which, according to the Assembly, were made under duress. UNMIK is considering a range of possible administrative recourses.

On 14 December, UNMIK and representatives of the Government of Yugoslavia met to discuss the matter of detainees and missing persons. The meeting focused on practical arrangements for family visits in prisons under Belgrade's authority and in those under UNMIK's authority. Yugoslavian representatives also asked that their medical personnel be authorized to conduct medical examinations of Serb prisoners held in Kosovo detention facilities before family visits. Yugoslavian authorities declined an UNMIK request to allow international doctors to visit and evaluate sick Albanian prisoners in detention centres in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but they did pledge to have their own doctors conduct thorough examinations. On 17 December, UNMIK, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, conducted a second family visit to the Nis prison involving relatives of 20 prisoners.

On security matters, since the Council was last briefed by the Secretariat, there has been one serious security incident in northern Kosovo. On 18 December, the UNMIK municipal building in Zubin Potok was the scene of a shooting and grenade attack. Threats and attacks against members of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) have continued. The principal coordination mechanism to ensure an effective and coordinated international community response to these incidents is the UNMIK Political Violence Task Force. A number of senior LDK politicians remain under UNMIK Police protection.

With respect to minority communities in Kosovo, Kosovo Serbs and their property have continued to be the targets of violent incidents, including arson and grenade attacks. In Ashkalija communities, the atmosphere has remained tense following the November killing of four Ashkalija returnees in Srbica, in the Mitrovica region. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that, in several locations, Ashkalija parents have kept their children home from school out of fear for their safety. Interethnic tensions thus continue to create problems for minority community access to social services. For example, access to health care, particularly in the smaller minority communities, is in danger of deteriorating further. These services have largely been provided by non-governmental organizations and KFOR. However, a number of non-governmental organizations either have or are planning to pull out of Kosovo. The Department of Health

established by UNMIK is endeavouring to fill the gaps that will be caused by these departures.

The recent unrest in Kosovo's northern municipalities has resulted in increased pressure on Kosovo Albanians and other minorities in these areas. In this respect, a sharp increase was noted in the number of incidents targeting Kosovo Albanians and other minorities who remain in the northern side of the town of Mitrovica. UNHCR estimates that as few as 19 Kosovar Albanian families remain within the general population in that part of town. UNHCR notes that minorities are still leaving the province, though recent departures tend to be small in scale.

On 13 January, the Joint Committee on the Return of Kosovo Serbs endorsed a framework document on returns in 2001. The framework document notes that return operations should be low-profile, incremental and orderly. It contains a detailed analysis of living conditions in Kosovo Serb communities throughout the province and specific recommendations as to measures required and resources needed at the local and central levels in order to create the conditions favourable for returns. Both the Serb National Councils of Gracanica and Mitrovica have strongly endorsed the framework document.

(*spoke in English*)

I would now like to turn to civil administration and the rule of law. Since the Council was last briefed, there have been key developments in civil administration. Employment offices are now operational in a growing number of communities. An initiative to place a youth worker in every municipality has been launched in order to involve the young in community activities, such as refuse clean-up and safe driving campaigns. By the end of 2000, more than 100 schools had been constructed or repaired. All tent schools have been replaced by containers. Facilities and staff have been provided to care for abandoned children and adoption procedures are now in place to find permanent homes for them. As of the end of December, 46,000 families were receiving social assistance. UNMIK's second winterization programme is under way, assisted by unseasonably mild weather. Firewood and coal have been distributed to needy families and emergency shelters have been constructed in key cities.

The Mission has made significant progress in strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo. The Kosovo Judicial Institute and the World Bank began work on a $3-million technical assistance project to establish various aspects of commercial law, including training for judges and lawyers. The Judicial Performance Working Group has launched its review of the judiciary, with specific attention to possible misconduct of judges, lay judges and prosecutors.

The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) has improved in both quantity and quality. 312 cadets graduated from the eleventh class at the Kosovo Police Service School on 16 December, bringing the total number of trainee police officers who graduated from the school's basic training course to 2,851. Despite increased threats and intimidation against Kosovo Police Service personnel, KPS officers are largely performing in a professional manner. This was exemplified by the pursuit and arrest by an off-duty KPS officer of a homicide suspect who had escaped multiple times after being arrested for shooting a Russian KFOR soldier.

With respect to economic reconstruction, UNMIK's initial focus on emergency reconstruction has now shifted to economic development and the promotion of private sector enterprise. Attention has focused on the development of small to medium-size enterprises, which should generate the bulk of sustainable job growth. Substantial progress has been made towards establishing a legal framework to support private sector development. Four core regulations — dealing with business organizations, pledges, foreign investment and contracts — have been endorsed by the IAC. In mid-December, the Mission published a preliminary assessment of the continuing reconstruction and economic development needs of Kosovo. In addition to private sector development, the assessment outlined five other priorities, including education, health, poverty alleviation, public administration and housing.

Under the Kosovo consolidated budget for 2001, domestic sources of revenue will play an increasingly major role in funding expenditures. The 2001 budget provides for total recurrent and some capital expenditures of 743 million deutsche marks in public enterprises, the municipalities and the general government. This is financed from domestic revenues — such as taxes, fees and user charges — of 541 million deutsche marks and donor grants of 202 million deutsche marks, of which 40 million deutsche marks is exclusively for electricity imports, if required.

With respect to the situation in southern Serbia, the security environment in the Presevo Valley remains tense, although the risks of major conflict appear to have diminished. Most of the 5,000 ethnic Albanians who fled in November 2000 have since returned to their homes in southern Serbia. However, the situation is not yet stable. Elements from the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medveda and Bujanovac (UCPMB) have moved into towns and villages, reportedly to protect the returning populations, and are now in close proximity to Serbian police and Yugoslav military forces. In addition, several incidents in southern Serbia have threatened the ceasefire understanding reached in early December. They include the abduction on 31 December of six ethnic Serbs near a crossing point into Kosovo, all of whom were released the next day after intervention by KFOR.

KFOR has continued to play a major role in helping to stabilize the situation, including a visit by the Commander of KFOR to Bujanovac on 20 December. Following this visit, KFOR brokered an agreement on 30 December designed to improve freedom of movement between Bujanovac in Serbia proper and the town of Gnjilane in Kosovo. On 10 January, the UNHCR Special Envoy visited villages in the ground safety zone and held meetings with the ethnic Albanian Mayor of Presevo and Mr. Covic, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, in order to assess the situation of the returnees. Mr. Covic emphasized his desire to work with KFOR to arrange for the peaceful disarmament of ethnic Albanian fighters in the area, gave security guarantees for all those who wished to return to their homes in Presevo, and told UNHCR that there would be compensation for any damages to property by the security forces.

Mr. Covic also stated that arrangements would be made to enhance the role of ethnic Albanians in local government. According to UNHCR, further concrete measures, such as the inclusion of ethnic Albanians in the local police forces and the demilitarization of the area, are needed in order to address the sources of tension in the area. UNHCR has established a presence in the area in order to closely monitor the situation.

The issue of depleted uranium has been very much in the news, and I shall take the opportunity of this briefing to say a few words on that particular issue. In November 2000, UNMIK invited a team of scientists, led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and including the International Atomic Energy Agency, to study the possible presence of radioactivity in and around sites where depleted uranium ammunition was used. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), through KFOR, provided maps identifying 112 such sites, most of them in southern and western Kosovo. The UNEP-led team visited 11 sites: five in the west and six in the south of the province. The team collected 340 samples of soil, water and vegetation, and conducted smear tests on buildings, destroyed army vehicles and depleted uranium penetrators. The samples are now being analysed in Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Austria and Italy.

The team's preliminary field findings show three sites with no signs of higher radioactivity, nor any remnants of depleted uranium ammunition. At eight sites, the team found slightly higher amounts of radiation immediately at or around the holes left by depleted uranium ammunition, or pieces and remnants of ammunition. The team's final report is expected in March 2001, although a further follow-up mission may be needed.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UNMIK Department of Health and Social Welfare have examined the incidence of leukaemia in Kosovo. Records at Pristina Hospital for the past four years were reviewed, and doctors from district hospitals have been interviewed. The initial survey indicates that the incidence of leukaemia in adults in Kosovo has not increased.

UNMIK is taking a number of specific steps to deal with the potential problems posed by depleted uranium. Warning signs are being posted by UNMIK in all known areas that were targeted by shells containing depleted uranium. At UNMIK's request, the World Health Organization has seconded a staff member to Pristina to coordinate the establishment of a voluntary testing programme for Kosovo residents and UNMIK staff at Pristina Hospital. The WHO is also dispatching to Kosovo three specialists — a toxicologist, an authority on radiation and an environment expert — to assess the consequences of depleted uranium. A committee of local medical experts is being established, with a representative from the UNMIK Department of Health among its members. Members of the committee will be included in briefing sessions dealing with the public health aspects of depleted uranium.

A public information campaign is being developed to inform Kosovo residents, both local and international, about depleted uranium and what is known about illnesses, specifically leukaemia, which may or may not be related to ingesting depleted uranium.

To conclude, I should like to stress that over the last 18 months, UNMIK has made impressive progress in the implementation of its mandate. The support of the members of the Council and the inspired leadership of Mr. Kouchner have played an essential role in this process. As the leadership of the Mission passes from one Special Representative of the Secretary-General to another, preparations are already under way to tackle the new set of challenges UNMIK will face in the coming months. The new Special Representative of the Secretary-General has laid out a clear agenda for the future. Under his leadership, the Mission will concentrate on developing a legal framework for provisional self-government in Kosovo, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Renewed energy will also be put into the development of effective law-enforcement institutions. In addition, UNMIK will establish an office in Belgrade in order to facilitate dialogue with the Government of Yugoslavia. In order to realize these ambitious goals, the Mission will continue to rely upon the type of strong and committed support it has enjoyed from the Council and Member States since its inception.

The President: I thank Mr. Guéhenno for his comprehensive briefing.

Mr. Holbrooke (United States of America): Let me express my great appreciation and pleasure at speaking on my next to last day in this job before you, Mr. Foreign Minister, my old friend, from a country I have been associated with for most of my professional career. It is our honour to be here under your presidency today, and tomorrow as well, I hear, which will be an even greater honour. It is a great pleasure to see you again here in New York.

I want to thank the Under-Secretary-General for an excellent and comprehensive briefing, one that responds to all of the issues in front of us. I praise him and his colleagues, and I share in his strong appreciation of the outstanding work of the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Bernard Kouchner.

Since this is my penultimate appearance before the Security Council, I should like to make a general remark first about the situation and also about the troop-contributing nations. I am delighted to see that so many of them are represented here today. I want to echo what my colleague, Ambassador Cunningham — who will take over the Mission this weekend and remain as the strong chargé d'affaires, fully and personally backed by the Secretary of State-designate, General Powell, who has personally asked him to remain — said to the Council Tuesday about troop-contributing countries. I strongly support what he said concerning the role of the troop-contributing countries in these deliberations, pending the full-scale reform of the Security Council, which I called for in April, when I changed the American position on Security Council membership. We believe that countries of concern should be here in this room and should have their views heard.

My principle is very simple: transparency and openness in deliberations and all points of view heard, but changes in the actual rules of the Security Council should be part of a comprehensive process. I regret that that has not moved forward further since our announcement in April. But we have left it on the table, and Secretary-designate Powell addressed it yesterday in very open terms at his hearing. I urge the Council to look at what he said on Security Council reform.

Again, I want to stress to the troop-contributing countries present here — and I am glad that Ambassador Schori is at the table with us to represent the European Union — that I strongly support their active participation in our deliberations.

Let me turn now to the Balkans, and particularly to the remarks we have just heard. Of course, the last year has marked a profound change in the situation, almost entirely for the better. Rather than managing constant crises, we now face the more reasonable task of constructing a peaceful and stable future. Still, I want to emphasize that the problems in front of us are extraordinarily difficult. We need to overcome the legacy of corruption, cronyism, economic mismanagement and just plain, downright criminal activities that are so common to countries in post-communist transition and that are particularly endemic in this war-torn region.

The people of Montenegro and Serbia have tough political challenges ahead. They must clean out the

remnants of the old regime, and they must work with the brave leaders of Montenegro to reconcile conflicting approaches to Yugoslavia's constitutional future. President Gjukanovic deserves our appreciation for his steadfastness in the face of Milosević's efforts to crush democracy in Montenegro. How the dispute between Montenegro and Serbia will be resolved is a matter for the two Republics within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to resolve for themselves in a peaceful fashion. I cannot predict how that dispute will be resolved, although I have talked at length to both President Koštunica and President Gjukanovic about that. But I want to stress that the terrain on which that argument is being handled is totally different, and that an entirely peaceful and mutually satisfactory resolution should be achievable, given the leadership in both Republics.

In Bosnia there is much left to do, but progress has been steady and Dayton has been a success. The nation is at peace with itself and with its neighbours. Since we met last, Yugoslavia has recognized Bosnia. Anyone here who has been involved in this issue for a long time — and I think that, in this Chamber, I am probably the person involved in this issue the longest — can say that it was the very issue of recognition that was an animating force in the war itself. All this has been done without injury from hostile action to a single solider of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). That is directly contrary to the dire predictions made by so many people in the early 1990s.

We salute the more than 1,000 brave United Nations peacekeepers who died or were wounded in Bosnia. We note — and I want to stress this — that of the over 1,000 casualties among United Nations peacekeepers the largest single number of casualties was sustained by our great allies the French. But there were no NATO casualties. The difference is inherent in the difference between the United Nations presence in Bosnia and the NATO-driven presence as a result of Dayton. This has given the United Nations and the international community a chance to build a single nation.

While we are far from finished in Bosnia, we have made huge progress. Refugee returns to minority areas have increased significantly, and they are increasing across the board. I especially congratulate the European Union on its significant economic efforts. We can now move farther and faster, in the light of the changes in Zagreb and Belgrade and those occurring in Sarajevo.

Extreme nationalists too often blocked the implementation of Dayton, and they drew support form their neighbouring capitals. That era is over, and the future of Bosnia therefore looks much brighter.

The elections that took place in Bosnia underline several points. In the short term, the strengthening of some of the nationalist parties was not good news, and we must be honest about that. The nationalist parties took advantage of democracy to strengthen their positions, but they are the enemies of democracy. As the people of Bosnia continue to assemble their governments at every level, I have a simple message to my friends in that country: the extreme nationalist parties have no future; they are backward-looking and corrupt, they victimize the very people who support them, and they keep them isolated and weakened economically. They have no place in the future of Bosnia or in the future of Europe.

But there was also good news in those elections. For the first time in Bosnia's post-war history there is a real chance that moderate politicians will be able to assemble a functioning legislative majority at the national level, as well as a fully functioning Government. If that works, it will open up dramatic opportunities for progress and send a powerful message to the world.

I call on the High Representative in Bosnia to watch the new Governments carefully and to act aggressively against those who violate the spirit and letter of the Dayton Agreements. I continue to believe, and I will say it one last time as an official of the United States Government, that the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) — the party of Radovan Karadzic and his fellow war criminals — should have been banned a long time ago. It has no place in Bosnia's future. They are the Nazis of the Balkans. I am hopeful that when the dust from that election settles, the extreme nationalists will be further marginalized. I take note of the voluntary detention of Madam Plavsic, who is now in The Hague. What she did was courageous and correct. I am sure that it will be taken into account as the legal proceedings against her proceed, and I believe that it should send a powerful signal to other people in the region that they can run but they cannot hide.

The situation in Kosovo, which is what we are here to discuss today, also remains extremely difficult.

I warmly welcome the successor to Mr. Kouchner, Hans Haekkerup, to his new task. I had excellent talks with him during his trip to New York. I urge him publicly, as I did privately, not only to continue the excellent work of his predecessor in accordance with what the Under-Secretary-General has reported to us today, but also to focus on two overriding issues of transcendent historic importance. Anyone here who has been in Pristina knows that just working in that atmosphere on a day-to-day basis is so difficult that one can lose track of the larger issues. But I have no question that Minister Haekkerup, with his vast experience as a former Minister of Defence, will be able to succeed there. I believe that while he continues his day-to-day efforts Mr. Haekkerup's primary focus should be to hold Kosovo-wide elections as soon as possible so that the people of Kosovo can govern themselves democratically.

That is what is called for in resolution 1244 (1999). While there is a legitimate disagreement in the Chamber about certain aspects of that resolution — and I know I will hear in a moment from some of my friends about views of theirs that differ from the ones I have stated — there should be no disagreement on the next major step, because resolution 1244 (1999) definitely calls for self-governing status internally. I recognize the ambiguity on final status, and I will address that in a minute. But I say to my friends in the Chamber, and particularly to my friends from the Russian Federation and China — with whom we have had previous disagreements on this matter — that there should be no disagreement about the Kosovo-wide elections. If there is, I would hope that it will be aired publicly and prominently so that we can address it. But my view is that that is unambiguous. In fact, as most present will recall, it was my view that the election held last September should have included the Kosovo-wide level as well as the municipal level. That was not the decision made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). So be it. The election took place. It was successful. It was peaceful. Then the Serbian elections took place. They were successful. They were peaceful. Contrary to the fears of many people, including my own concerns, they took place inside Kosovo as well without problems. So I think the situation is now open for this all-important election. My own hope is that it will be held as early as this spring. That may be overly optimistic, but I urge the Security Council, and I urge the Under-Secretary-General, and I urge Mr. Haekkerup and the OSCE to start planning it now. It takes 120 to 180 days from the time one commits oneself, and the longer we talk, the longer we wait; and this needs to be done. After it is done, this Council and the world community will face an even greater challenge.

On the next point — the future and final status of Kosovo — I can only offer some speculative opinions, because one cannot really deal with this issue — the final status — until the elections have been held. But I believe the elections will be a success and will produce a reasonable group of elected officials who will represent the aspirations of the people of Kosovo. I hope that this election will include the Serbs and other ethnic groups besides the Albanians in Kosovo so that it can be fully representative.

After that election, however, we will need to recognize the underlying fact. Kosovo will never be peaceful and stable until its status is resolved. The continuing violence of the region, most of which is currently coming from extremists on the Albanian side, is unacceptable. But until we resolve the status issue in a mutually satisfactory way, the anxieties the problem causes will continue to fester and lead to more problems. Anyone who doubts the danger of this issue needs to look only a little bit further to the East, to the Middle East, to the area seething now, to the occupied territories, to recognize how dangerous this issue will be if it is left to fester.

If we are having this discussion 10 years from today, if NATO troops are still in Kosovo 10 years from today, we will have failed. Ten years may seem inconceivable, but the United Nations Command is still in existence in Korea 48 years after the end of the Korean War precisely because the status of Korea was never resolved, and so the United Nations Command has had to remain, and the American troops remain in Korea 48 years later. I hope that the Council will not have to be discussing Kosovo 10 years or 5 years from today, but it will unless the status is resolved.

Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) states clearly that all options remain on the table and sets forth a process without dictating a solution. It is the task to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo to facilitate the political process that will resolve this issue. Again I stress that the intensive work must follow the elections, but we must be aware of this issue now. It may take some time. It may take a long time for the process on final status to

reach a solution. But I believe that the process should begin as soon as the two sides are ready. Nothing would do more to reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that drive the violence in Kosovo than the start of a fair process aimed at resolving the status of Kosovo.

I think we should be clear about two points before this process begins. First, the terms of any eventual settlement must be mutually acceptable to both sides and backed by the international community. No other approach will result in a stable, long-term solution. No other approach will permit a significant drawdown in external forces.

Secondly, the need to start this dialogue only increases the importance of holding the elections I spoke of earlier, the Kosovo-wide elections, as soon as possible. The people of Kosovo need democratically chosen leaders to speak for them in this discussion that will take place.

We cannot allow the challenges that remain to detract from our sense of what was already been accomplished, however. The Balkans are a very different place, and a much better place, than they were eight years ago. Violent clashes seemed to lurk around every corner until recently. But today the chances of a major conflict are increasingly remote, especially thanks to the democratic Government of President Koštunica and the newly elected leadership of Serbia under Prime Minister Zizić. I also want to congratulate Prime Minister Zizić, who I have known for many years as an opposition leader, for having finally taken his rightful place as an elected, democratically chosen leader.

Still, my friends, there is much yet to do. My greatest regret is that the main perpetrators of the region's crimes are not yet in The Hague where they belong. But the net is closing in. As I said earlier, Ms. Plavcic's voluntary surrender last week was an important step forward, and I say here publicly that I am sure that she will be able to offer important evidence of crimes that others committed, and the others should think hard about what that means for them.

I am confident that the next Administration will have no more tolerance for the forces of ethnic separatism and hatred than we have. Secretary of State-designate Colin Powell spoke movingly yesterday of America's role as a beacon of freedom in the world. I draw the Council's attention to his comments, which were very gratifying — his powerful statement of support for the Atlantic partnership and for the United Nations and his appreciation for the commitments we made in the Balkans to our allies and the people of the region, for America's freedom is inextricably tied to the freedom and prosperity of Europe. We stand strongest when we stand together with the United Nations and with our closest allies.

On a personal note, this closes out my official responsibilities in regard to this issue, but I can assure the Council that I will remain deeply involved as a private citizen, as I did in previous incarnations as a private citizen both in the 1992-1993 period and again in the 1996-1999 period. So, you may not see me in this Chamber again talking about this issue, but you will probably hear from me. Perhaps what I say will not be universally welcomed, but my commitment to this issue remains undiminished, and I look forward to watching all of you as you proceed. The long journey is not over, but we have made tremendous progress. At long last, I think the dream of a Europe united, whole and free seems to be within sight.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for his kind words addressed to me and to my country.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his elaborate briefing on the situation in Kosovo.

Last week Mr. Kouchner handed over his charge as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. That concluded his 18-month-long responsibility in one of the most difficult areas where the United Nations is involved in peacekeeping, with the added responsibility of governance. In this year and a half, Mr. Kouchner was able to reach out to the victims of a damaged and divided society with courage, compassion and urgency. That was critical in addressing the priorities of a population devastated by war.

We heartily welcome Mr. Hans Haekkerup as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo and as the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). His predecessor has left behind a firm foundation on which to build. Still, the task ahead is huge and by no means an easy one. We are convinced that with his experience, wisdom and dedication, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General will give the United Nations Mission in Kosovo new dynamism.

I will mention some of the immediate priorities that the new Special Representative will need to focus on. The first is curbing violence. That will be one of the main issues on his agenda. Violence and killing must stop, irrespective of the ethnicity of the population. It is true that the ethnic hatred is now scaled down substantially, compared to a year before. But it is still smouldering. Wounds are raw, and untoward incidents could easily flare up and quickly get out of control. Careful attention should be given to ensure arrangements that will make all people feel safe. With the number of police now approaching the target level, and with much better functional administration, there is now a brighter prospect that an end can be brought to violence.

Second is the matter of elections. One of the remarkable achievements in Kosovo was the holding of municipal elections last October. The process demonstrated the desire to exercise democratic rights and move towards self-governance. The outcome also points to how the majority of the people view their future. It was reassuring for the world to see that the Kosovars inclined towards the moderate leadership and their aspiration to live in peace. The logical next step would be to hold Kosovo-wide general elections. Participation by all the population of Kosovo, all ethnic groups, is important.

Third is the judiciary. A greater level of judicial activity has been seen, particularly recently, with the increase in the number of persons and material resources. The addition of about a dozen international judges, seized mainly with war crimes and ethnically related crimes, has contributed to significant improvement in the area. An effective judiciary is, needless to say, important for establishment of the rule of law.

Fourth is the issue of refugee return. The return of nearly a million refugees from June 1999 to date, both spontaneously and through organized efforts, is a great success. Although the rate of return was expected to fall in winter, it is conceivable that the flow will go up with the approach of spring. It is necessary at this point to enhance the facilities necessary to handle large-scale returns. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has a special role to play.

The fifth priority is missing persons and detainees. The uncertainty regarding the fate of the missing persons remains a matter of great anxiety and torment for various ethnic communities in Kosovo. This continues to be a major source of tension in inter-ethnic relations and an obstacle to the return to normalcy.

We welcomed the decision to appoint Ambassador Henrik Amneus as Special Envoy, as his mandate covers all persons deprived of liberty, including prisoners, detainees and missing persons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We expect a comprehensive solution to the missing and the detained, rather than intervention in individual cases, which would take a long time. The prospect has significantly brightened with the establishment of democratic government in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is unfortunate that we have yet to see any breakthrough in this regard, in this politically sensitive and at the same time humanitarian issue. We would urge the Kostunica Government to take urgent initiatives in this regard. We would like to hear a report on the outcome of the mandate of Ambassador Amneus.

Sixthly, there is the matter of development and reconstruction. The effort to construct a vibrant, market-oriented economy in Kosovo with a view to building institutions for eventual integration with the rest of Europe should continue. It must take into account the essential inputs for a well-functioning economy, including housing, utilities and employment. While there is an ongoing effort to address the immediate needs, investment must at the same time be made to lay the foundations for a long-term solution.

Before concluding, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for briefing the Council on the situation arising from reported depleted uranium contamination in Kosovo. It will be our responsibility to keep the matter under close watch.

Kosovo has come a long way in a relatively short span of time, from a war-ravaged inter-ethnic hotbed to a society with cautious optimism for a peaceful future. The task of building a self-governing society from the ruins of war is enormous. It is particularly so when the hangover from the past contributes little to the transition into a modern society. We should give the Kosovars at least some time before inferring that progress is not fast enough. During all that time, they need our constant support and encouragement. We wish the new Special Representative all success in his

onerous undertaking of leading the United Nations Mission to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are also grateful to Mr. Guéhenno for the informative briefing he has given us about the situation in Kosovo and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK).

Our debate today is taking place at a time when the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General is taking up his duties — the new leader of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Haekkerup. He has inherited a difficult situation. As we have often said, his predecessor, in our opinion, allowed several distortions in implementing Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and, virtually circumventing the Council, took a number of serious measures which would have led to separating Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

But now a new stage is beginning, and we expect that with the appointment of the new Special Representative this flawed practice will be totally ended. We are convinced that in his work the Special Representative, whatever margin he may have for independent action, will — and must — strictly respect the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic, enshrined in resolution 1244 (1999).

Today there is a qualitatively new situation in the region, and full use must be made of this. The new democratic leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has declared that it is interested in establishing close contacts and cooperation with the Special Representative. Use must be made of this intent so that decisions on matters of great importance will be taken in agreement with the authorities of Yugoslavia.

Russia welcomes the establishment of such cooperation. To that end, thought might be given to establishing some special mechanism, something along the lines of a joint implementation commission, for implementing the military-technical agreements. Also important is the question of the status of the two international presences. As we have often said, this question must be settled by the signing of appropriate agreements with the Federal Republic.

It is also important to help establish a dialogue between Belgrade and the representatives of the Kosovo Albanians. The moderates who supported Rugova in the municipal elections must now show in actions that their constructive position is to help get negotiations with Belgrade started.

We also believe that the timing of the Kosovo-wide elections and the parameters for substantial regional autonomy are matters that must be decided on in close cooperation with Belgrade. The elections must not be an end in themselves. The holding and timing of elections must be determined by the extent to which they will help to achieve a comprehensive settlement in Kosovo. Rushing the elections before an appropriate level of security has been established and a solution to the return of refugees and displaced persons has been found, and before the creation of a multinational society has been identified in Kosovo, would simply strengthen the mono-ethnic nature of the area. That would only complicate the prospects for achieving a political settlement within the context of resolution 1244 (1999).

In this connection, we would draw attention to reports we have received that, at a university in Bern, on the recommendation of the Swiss Government, work is supposedly under way to prepare a draft provisional constitution for Kosovo. We should like to ask whether the United Nations Secretariat has any information on this? It is also rather important to determine whether the Yugoslav authorities have been involved in or asked to consent to the drafting of this document.

The disarmament of former fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army must be completed. Much remains to be done. In this respect, we draw attention to the most recent monthly report on the activities of the forces in Kosovo, in which there was a reference to suspicions that weapons found last November in caves near Dac Mala had been brought across the border and stored with a view to future use or sale. One might conclude from this that all has not yet been done to end the movement of weapons into Kosovo.

Turning to the situation in Presevo, we support the approach taken by Belgrade to resolve the matter through political dialogue with local Albanians. We consider Belgrade's proposal to begin work on an assessment of the Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement on the territorial scope and regime governing the ground safety zone to be fully justified.

We cannot fail to refer to another problem that has concerned the world in general in recent days. I refer to the so-called "Balkan syndrome", caused by

the consequences of the use of depleted uranium ordinance in Kosovo, and its impact on the health of the local population and international personnel on the ground. We consider it essential that thorough and objective international expertise be made available to establish the truth of the situation. We await the results of research by the United Nations Environment Programme and expect the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to provide its full cooperation to that work. This is not a minor issue for the Security Council, but a problem that falls fully within its competence. The Security Council established the international presence in Kosovo and accordingly bears responsibility for the security and health of international personnel there.

In conclusion, we draw the attention of Council members to the fact that, despite our frequent requests, the Security Council has yet to receive the report of the Finnish pathologists on the results of the tragic incident in Racak. We are aware that the report is available to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, but our frequent requests to the United Nations Secretariat have had no response to date. We hope that this matter can finally be brought to its logical conclusion and that the principle of transparency of which we have often heard speak in this Chamber, will ensure that the necessary information be made to the Security Council.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his briefing on the developments in Kosovo since the Council was last briefed on 19 December. Many of the concerns which were expressed in that briefing by my delegation still remain, particularly in relation to the security situation, the situation of minority communities, detained and missing persons and the humanitarian situation. We are still deeply concerned about the situation in the Presevo Valley and the potential for destabilization. That situation must not be allowed to worsen further.

Since we were briefed in December, Mr. Hans Haekkerup has taken over as head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in succession to the dynamic leadership of Mr. Bernard Kouchner, to whom my delegation wishes all the best in his future endeavours. We extend a warm welcome to the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General as he seeks to address the remaining challenges in Kosovo. We have noted that his first priority is to speed up the preparatory process that will lead to Kosovo-wide elections. We agree that the legal framework for an elected assembly and provisional Government has to be settled before such elections are held.

We are still convinced that the provisions in resolution 1244 (1999) must serve as the basis for the work of UNMIK and must be fully implemented. The work of UNMIK is significant and my delegation wishes once again to express our unequivocal support for that work as the Mission's men and women seek to prepare Kosovo for substantial autonomy, in collaboration with the people of Kosovo. We encourage UNMIK to continue its work in reconfiguring the existing administrative structures as part of its efforts to build local capacity for self-governance.

We believe that the process of defining autonomy and of developing institutions of self-government, with the people of Kosovo sharing more and more responsibility in the administration of the province, must be actively pursued. The early meeting between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the members of the Interim Administrative Council underlines his commitment to fulfilling the terms of resolution 1244 (1999).

The Jamaican delegation fully supports the other priorities set out by the Special Representative, namely, making law enforcement as effective as possible in order to create a secure environment for the return of Kosovo Serbs, and fighting organized crime. While there have been notable improvements over the last year and a half, my delegation remains concerned about the security situation and the situation of minorities. We have always maintained that, until these are effectively addressed, it will be difficult to promote reconciliation. These groups continue to feel at risk and this does not augur well for continued forward movement. We have noted the terms of the framework document to which Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno referred, established for the return of Kosovo Serbs, and we hope that this document can be put into practice speedily.

It is only when these concerns are addressed that the people of Kosovo will be able to focus on their pressing social and economic needs. We welcome the focus on economic development, particularly the development of small and medium enterprises. We agree that a legal framework is critical for the

promotion of private-sector development, and we welcome the four key regulations which were endorsed by the Interim Administrative Council (IAC).

The priorities outlined by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, in addition to private-sector development, are essential when looking at Kosovo's development in a broader sense. Built into the areas of health, education, poverty alleviation and housing, however, must be the focus on capacity-building, which will prepare the people of Kosovo for autonomy and ensure sustainability of the projects which have begun.

Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno has informed us that the situation in southern Serbia, in the Presevo Valley, remains unstable, and that recent incidents threaten the ceasefire. If the sources of tension are to be removed, it is important that a spirit of reconciliation be generated among the communities. The flow of illegal weapons must be stopped.

My delegation reiterates that it is imperative that there should be increased surveillance by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) to put an end to extremist activities and to stop the traffic in illegal weapons. We continue to be encouraged by the commitment of the Yugoslav authorities to work with UNMIK, and we believe that this can only be helped by UNMIK's decision to establish a liaison office in Belgrade.

The issue of trafficking in human persons is one which my delegation has addressed on several occasions over the past year. We were therefore pleased to learn that UNMIK has now approved a regulation making trafficking in persons a crime punishable by two to 20 years in prison. This is an important development, as it indicates the seriousness of the crime, which affects mainly women and which has to be addressed in concert with the neighbouring countries.

The regulations prohibiting trials *in absentia* for serious violations of law and creating the legal guarantees necessary to make Kosovo more attractive to foreign investment are other important additions to the corpus of law for Kosovo.

Let me join in thanking Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for having briefed the Council on the voluntary testing programme being instituted by UNMIK in regard to the possible hazards from depleted uranium. This is important to allay fears, particularly among the civilian population of Kosovo, and we agree with Ambassador Chowdhury that the Council should be kept informed of any developments.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes that many challenges remain for Kosovo and for the international community in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). We will continue to fully support the efforts of UNMIK and the people of Kosovo as they seek to chart their future destiny.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): Mr. Foreign Minister, it is good to see you here again guiding our deliberations, and we look forward to your able stewardship again tomorrow. I should like also at this point to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for a very exhaustive and useful briefing.

Ambassador Schori of Sweden will speak on behalf of the European Union later in this debate, and, since my delegation fully supports what he will say, I should like to raise only a few points during this intervention.

The first point that I think we should bear in mind on this occasion is the tribute we owe to Mr. Kouchner, who left Kosovo last weekend after a stint of 18 months. His commitment has been remarkable. He has achieved a major transformation, and I would not like to let this occasion pass without reiterating the United Kingdom's thanks to him for his hard work. As he takes up the reins, Mr. Haekkerup will have the support of a now very experienced United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) team. The tasks he faces will be as challenging as they have been over the last year and a half.

Despite the honest differences of opinion to which Ambassador Holbrooke referred and of which I picked up tinges in Ambassador Gatilov's statement, it is most important that Mr. Haekkerup should know that he has the full weight of the Council behind him, because his task will continue to be very difficult. I can assure him, and the Council, that he will have the United Kingdom's full support.

The security situation in the Presevo Valley and in southern Serbia continues to be of serious concern. We condemn the ongoing violent action by armed groups. We welcome the action that the Kosovo Force (KFOR) has taken to address the problem, and I think that Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno's briefing testifies to the effectiveness of that action. We also

welcome the restraint shown by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Serbian forces.

A lasting solution to the problems in the Presevo Valley can be achieved only through dialogue between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbian authorities, and representatives of the local Albanian communities. My delegation urges a start to that dialogue as soon as possible in order to bring about the earliest possible resolution of the situation.

At most Council meetings on Kosovo over the last year, my delegation, like many others – and I particularly noted the strong statement this morning by Ambassador Chowdhury – has expressed its concern over the situation of detainees and missing persons. In this connection, we strongly welcome the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia Federal Cabinet's approval of a draft amnesty law. We call on the authorities there to release all Kosovar Albanian prisoners held on political grounds as soon as possible. It goes without saying that a swift conclusion to this sensitive issue would be a very important step towards reconciliation between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Kosovo.

We have got a busy morning, and I will leave it there. Ambassador Schori will, as I have said, speak more exhaustively on behalf of the European Union later on in the debate.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Sir, for having convened this meeting on Kosovo and for your continued interest in the Council's work. I should also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his very informative and useful briefing on the progress made by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). My delegation would like also to welcome the appointment of Mr. Hans Haekkerup, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo. We wish him every success in his new duties.

The current situation in the Balkans allows us to consider, with cautious optimism, a constructive political dialogue on the future of Kosovo. The successful elections of 28 October 2000 and the political stability in the region have opened new prospects for the implementation of a regime with substantial autonomy, as called for by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

We feel that the province's new configuration should take into consideration the right of all of its inhabitants to security, to respect for differences and to participation in public life. It should also outlaw hatred and attitudes based on ethnic considerations, and promote peaceful coexistence among all of the communities.

In this regard, we welcome the fact that Mr. Hans Haekkerup, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, has decided to open an office in Belgrade in order to strengthen dialogue with the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to prepare for the holding of legislative elections in the province of Kosovo.

One of the new Special Representative's priorities will be to restore security by tackling the root causes of the violence prevailing in the region. It should be pointed out that these violent actions are clearly political in nature and could destabilize the region. Apart from the fact that the violence is continuing to fuel tension among the inhabitants, it also prevents the reconciliation of ethnic communities and undermines the efforts of the international community. Those actions are unacceptable. We welcome the initiative to establish a special unit to fight organized crime throughout Kosovo.

The violence has led to a new flow of displaced persons in Kosovo and has made the situation even more complex. We encourage the Kosovo Force and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to continue their efforts to rein in the activities of extremists. In that regard, we believe that the international presence in Kosovo is more necessary than ever to maintain a climate of trust among all the parties and to strengthen harmony among its inhabitants. Any withdrawal by the international community should take place only after thoughtful reflection and the formulation of an exit strategy that guarantees a lasting return of peace to the region.

The issue of detainees and disappeared persons is particularly sensitive, and is one of the primary sources of inter-ethnic tension in Kosovo. We welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy on persons deprived of liberty to seek out appropriate responses to this tragedy. We invite all the parties to cooperate fully with him in order to facilitate his task.

Establishing a reliable and impartial judicial system is crucial for restoring peace in Kosovo. The

impartial and non-discriminatory application of the law will reinforce Kosovars' confidence in the rule of law, which is the sole guarantee of peaceful coexistence between all the ethnic communities. My delegation is pleased with the progress made in this area. We encourage the Mission to continue its efforts to bring about a reform of the criminal justice system in Kosovo.

The issue of refugees and displaced persons is crucial in the quest for a lasting solution to the problem of Kosovo. We must therefore work to ensure their return under satisfactory conditions, specifically, by strengthening the security of minority communities. This issue is even more crucial given the fact that returns often take place spontaneously. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In conclusion, I wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Bernard Kouchner, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo. I thank him for his tireless efforts and commitment and wish him the greatest success in his new duties.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): I am very grateful to Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his very comprehensive update on the latest developments in Kosovo and on the activities of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The general situation in Kosovo has not undergone substantial change. The positive tendencies towards general stabilization in the province that have been facilitated by the efforts of UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) were again challenged by a number of discouraging factors. Despite all of the international efforts made, inter-ethnic violence, lack of security for national minorities, high levels of organized crime and the abundance of illegal small weapons are still among the main features of the situation in Kosovo. Therefore, while acknowledging the work one by UNMIK and KFOR, my delegation thinks that there is still a long way to go to ensure full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999).

Ukraine welcomes the assumption of office on 15 January of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Haekkerup. We have taken careful note of Mr. Haekkerup's major priorities for his future activities in that key position, and we would like to express our full support to him. In particular, my delegation is satisfied with the very prudent approach taken by the Special Representative with regard to such a complex and sensitive issue as the Kosovo-wide general elections. We share his view that before such elections are held their legal framework should be developed. It is also important to lay a clear-cut foundation for future relations between the bodies to be established and UNMIK. We hope that the results of work on these issues will be presented to the Council before UNMIK proceeds further towards the holding of elections.

My delegation also endorses the second priority of the Head of UNMIK, that is, to make law enforcement in Kosovo as effective as possible. That will definitely facilitate the return of former Kosovo inhabitants, primarily Kosovo Serbs. At the same time, in our view, the problem of the return of national minorities to the province is not limited solely to the issue of security; it is also linked to securing their free access to social services, education and health care, as well as to settling the issue of property rights.

In the context of law enforcement, we welcome the recent actions by UNMIK police throughout the province to confiscate illegal weapons. We believe that the additional regulation increasing the penalties for possession of illegal weapons will also helpful. The recent issuance by UNMIK of a regulation making human trafficking a punishable crime is a timely step in the right direction.

My delegation also agrees with the third priority set forth by the new leadership of UNMIK: to foster a dialogue with the Belgrade authorities. My country strongly favours the establishment of an UNMIK office in Belgrade, and a proper dialogue and partnership relations between UNMIK and the Yugoslav authorities. In our view, that would enhance the effectiveness of the Mission and contribute to strengthening the democratic changes in Yugoslavia.

In that light, we pay tribute to the constructive role played by KFOR and UNMIK in providing the necessary security conditions for the holding of Serbian parliamentary elections in Kosovo on 23 December.

In that context, it is our hope that one of the first problems to be solved through a closer dialogue between UNMIK and KFOR, on the one hand, and the Yugoslav Government, on the other, will be the restoration of proper security conditions in the ground

safety zone. The security situation in the Presevo Valley, which has been addressed by the Security Council on several occasions, remains of serious concern to us. Regrettably, the past month has witnessed an increase in illegal and provocative activities in the ground safety zone by the ethnic Kosovo Albanian fighters, in clear defiance of all of KFOR's efforts. We think that any delay to take resolute action to disarm and disband those militants is fraught with the worst consequences possible for international peace efforts in Kosovo and far beyond.

We learned with deep concern of the announcement made by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) this month that the pieces of ammunition tips found at sites targeted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Kosovo during its military operation in 1999 contained depleted uranium. My country welcomes all precautionary measures undertaken by UNMIK and KFOR to protect the civilian population in Kosovo against any possible ill effects from the depleted uranium. As a contributor of troops to KFOR and of police and civilian personnel to UNMIK, and as the country that suffered the largest radiological disaster in the history of mankind, Ukraine stands for a comprehensive and independent investigation into these facts.

Finally, I want to mention one very special event that took place in Kosovo on 9 January. On that day the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, while paying a working visit to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia together with the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, visited the location of the joint Polish-Ukrainian peacekeeping battalion deployed by KFOR. It was a very successful visit. Let me finally quote President Kuchma's remarks after his meeting in Belgrade with Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica:

> "Through the working visit to Kosovo and Belgrade, Ukraine has demonstrated its consistent policy of respect for the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. This policy is based on the premise that stability in the Balkans depends on stability in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which, in its turn, is based on the preservation of its territorial integrity. Ukraine believes that the solution to the Kosovo problem should be sought in the framework of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)."

My delegation will continue to uphold this position in the Security Council in pursuit of a final settlement of the issue of Kosovo.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has come a long way since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Major developments have taken place both in Kosovo itself and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Guehenno, for a comprehensive briefing. It provided exactly the kind of high-quality information that was called for in our debate on cooperation with troop-contributing countries last Tuesday.

Like other major troop contributors and aid donors to the international community's efforts in Kosovo and the Balkans, Norway welcomes this open debate as an opportunity for us — Council members and affected non-members alike — to take stock of the situation at the start of what may be regarded as a new phase in UNMIK's operations.

While thanking the entire UNMIK staff, in particular Bernard Kouchner for his dedication and tireless work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Norway warmly welcomes the appointment of Hans Haekkerup of Denmark as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. He can count on Norway's full support in his endeavours to implement the tasks entrusted to him by the Security Council in resolution 1244 (1999).

Many serious challenges remain with important implications for international peace and security. First of all, the security situation and the level of violence in Kosovo continue to be of deep concern to us. Combating violence and providing protection for all minorities in Kosovo must remain a top priority for UNMIK and KFOR. It is unjustifiable that people continue to be killed and attacked because of their ethnic background. Norway condemns all acts of violence that undermine possibilities for multi-ethnic coexistence. We welcome the attention given by the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to law enforcement and fighting crime.

The prime operational responsibility rests with KFOR and the UNMIK police, but Kosovo's political leaders have a major responsibility for the development of a society based on tolerance and non-violence.

Newly elected local leaders must be reminded of this. Efforts to improve the overall situation for minorities, including with regard to health and other social services, must be reinforced. An improved situation for minorities is crucial for refugees to be able to return in safety and dignity.

Inter-Albanian violence, often with political connotations, is also a serious threat working against attempts to build a democratic society in Kosovo. The local population must be encouraged to step forward and assist in the identification of suspects.

A second challenge concerns elections. Norway welcomes the priority given by UNMIK to the implementation of the results of the local elections held last autumn. This must include the adjustment of the joint administrative structures to broaden their political and ethnic bases. Such adjustments will make the central institutions stronger, not weaker. These endeavours must be complemented with training and adequate funding for the newly elected bodies. Norwegian assistance to Kosovo, which amounted to $15 million last year and will remain at a high level of $12 million in 2001, will be directed towards institution-building and transfer of know-how in order to support good governance and generate sustainable employment.

Norway believes that even with comprehensive international assistance, it will be some time before we will be able to see the proper functioning of the newly elected municipal structures. We should allow some time for the local institutions to gain experience before moving to elections at the next level in Kosovo. The mandate and the composition of a Kosovo-wide assembly must be determined and a legal framework created before a decision on the date of the election is taken.

These issues must also be viewed within the context of the new political situation in Belgrade and the implications that this has for Kosovo and the region as a whole. As we have heard today, the preparation of a framework for political and administrative structures at the provincial level has started. This is a natural follow-up to the successfully held elections at the municipal level. Yugoslav authorities should be included in an appropriate manner when consultations outside the UNMIK structures are being carried out. Properly handled, the closer involvement of Belgrade in discussions regarding Kosovo can serve as a useful confidence-building measure both between the international community and Belgrade and between Belgrade and the Kosovo leaders.

We note with concern that the situation for the Kosovo Albanian political prisoners held in Serbia is still unclear. We call upon the Yugoslav authorities to find the appropriate legal channels for the speedy release of the Kosovo Albanian prisoners being held on political grounds. At the same time, further efforts must be made to establish the fate of Serbs missing in Kosovo.

Norway is pleased by the contacts established between UNMIK and the authorities in Belgrade following the democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We encourage and expect Kosovo Albanian leaders to explore the new possibilities for a constructive dialogue with the Yugoslav authorities.

Norway strongly condemns the recent attacks by ethnic Albanian armed groups in the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia. It is unacceptable that such groups violate the ground safety zone in order to launch attacks on targets in the Presevo Valley. The United Nations and KFOR must make every possible effort to prevent activities that can destabilize the situation in the region and adversely affect developments inside Kosovo. We welcome the measures taken by KFOR to improve the control of the boundary. Additional measures might be called for both by KFOR as regards the security zone, and the UNMIK police as regards preventive measures and investigations inside Kosovo. We also expect the Kosovo Albanian leaders to make greater efforts in order to impede these extremist elements. We commend the responsible and restrained approach by Belgrade in dealing with the situation in the Presevo Valley.

Norway, which, together with Denmark, is taking over as the KFOR lead nation from April this year, will also continue to actively support UNMIK, including through efforts to strengthen internal security and institution-building. It is crucial that the civilian and military sides of a peace operation be closely integrated.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Representative of Sweden will shortly be expressing the views of the European Union on the situation in Kosovo. France subscribes to the statement

that he will make. I should like simply to offer a few additional comments.

Last Saturday, after a remarkable stint of 18 months at the head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Bernard Kouchner passed the baton to Mr. Hans Haekkerup. Those 18 months involved an enormous amount of particularly difficult work — 18 months of rebuilding Kosovo, laying the foundations of a pluralistic democracy, re-establishing security, promoting coexistence among communities and organizing municipal elections under excellent conditions. Thanks to his resolve and courage, Mr. Kouchner was able to implement the basic elements of resolution 1244 (1999) and to restore confidence and dignity to Kosovo society.

I should like to assure his successor, Mr. Haekkerup, that we have full confidence in him and will provide full support to him as he continues to implement resolution 1244 (1999).

Improving security remains the top priority of the international community's action in Kosovo. In this regard, I should like to recall the last statement made by Mr. Kouchner before he left Pristina, in which he said that the spirit of revenge must be eradicated. All the inhabitants of Kosovo have the same right to security, access to public services and respect for their dignity. Each also has the right to have his or her voice heard by peaceful and democratic means in public debate. As was noted in the most recent report of the Secretary-General, extremists are seeking to put obstacles in the path to coexistence among communities and progress in establishing a democratic and pluralistic society This cannot be tolerated.

I should like to say a few words about violence in the Presevo Valley. In its presidential statement of 19 December, the Security Council strongly condemned intolerable actions by terrorist groups in that zone. We must support the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and UNMIK in their resolve to do everything possible to put an end to such actions.

We welcome the cooperation between KFOR and the Belgrade authorities aimed at remedying the situation, and we also welcome the restraint shown by the Yugoslav authorities. We encourage them to continue to take political and economic steps for the Albanian minority in south-east Serbia. France will play its part in the European Union effort to promote economic development in southern Serbia.

I should also like to raise the issue of the general elections. The elections must be organized when, and only when, conditions have been met. It is essential for preparations for the vote to be impeccable and, in particular, that everything be done to ensure that all the communities can participate, which means that minorities must be registered in advance, particularly the Serb community. Moreover, the nature and the functions of the bodies to be elected must be clearly defined in advance. In this regard, the discussions on the content of the substantial autonomy provided for in resolution 1244 (1999) must take place among Kosovars under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; I should like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his comments in this connection. It is also desirable that the views of other parties involved be taken into consideration at the appropriate time. In this regard, we welcome UNMIK's proposal to open an office in Belgrade.

Mr. Toure (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Guéhenno, for the exhaustive update he has given us on the situation in Kosovo and on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). During our public meeting on 19 December, I had the opportunity to mention the remarkable way in which the municipal elections of 28 October in Kosovo were organized, and I welcomed the close cooperation with the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which enabled UNMIK to attain notable political, security, administrative and judicial results. In addition to organizing municipal elections, UNMIK's achievements in the field have focused primarily on the gradual integration of the populations and of local administrations, as well as the consolidation of the administrative structures. That is why my delegation supports UNMIK in its efforts to expand the Kosovo Transitional Council, taking into account the political, ethnic and religious diversity of the province.

The integration of minorities into the administrative, legislative and judicial structures is an important step in the creation of a pluri-ethnic State. My delegation welcomes the progress that has been achieved in setting up municipal assemblies, and expresses its support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in appointing minority

community representatives to the assemblies in the areas where they live.

My delegation also supports the efforts being made by UNMIK to reform the central bodies so as to lead to substantial autonomy. We are certain that the drafting of regulations will continue as planned.

From a security point of view, my delegation is concerned about the wave of violence taking place over the last two months in the demilitarized area of southern Serbia, in the Presevo Valley, where clashes have intensified between Serb security forces and extremist groups of Albanian origin. The threats and acts of intimidation and violence against minorities in Kosovo are another cause for concern for my delegation. All of these illegal actions are unacceptable to my delegation, because they could destabilize the entire region and undermine the huge sacrifices made by the international community to build a pluri-ethnic and democratic Kosovo. We welcome the special measures taken by the international security presence, KFOR, to deal with that problem by strengthening border surveillance, confiscating weapons and stopping illegal activities within Kosovo close to the eastern administrative border. We believe that it is high time the people of Kosovo ended the violence characterizing their society and worked to restore the damaged fabric of Kosovo society after years of repression and conflict; its development and international aid depend on this.

My delegation regrets the fact that minorities are the target of threats, acts of intimidation and violence in Kosovo, necessitating the special security measures taken by the Kosovo Force against such illegal activity.

On the economic level, the re-organization of the local economy and the establishment of legal and trade organs that are indispensable for attracting foreign investment are principal concerns of my delegation. We welcome the measures already taken in the provision of banking and housing services, as well as regulations applying to businesses, foreign investment and contracts. My delegation encourages and welcomes the policy to rebuild housing for vulnerable families whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the conflict.

On the humanitarian level, the return of displaced Serbs to the province is a major challenge which the international community, UNMIK and the Belgrade authorities must take up. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must have adequate means to meet the needs of those who decide to return home, in particular the most vulnerable among them. The fundamental matter of the approximately 3,500 missing persons is a major concern for my delegation. We welcome the efforts that have been made thus far and urge the Belgrade authorities to step up investigations in order to inform the international community on the fate of the missing.

With respect to health, my delegation is concerned by the effects of the use of depleted uranium on civilian populations during the conflict in the Balkans in 1999. In this respect, we welcome the establishment by Mr. Kouchner, the outgoing head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, of a joint Albanian-Serb group entrusted with investigating the medical effects of depleted uranium.

My delegation wholeheartedly supports the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and believes that the constructive commitment of the democratic Government in Belgrade allows us to view the future with optimism.

In conclusion, my delegation must pay a well-deserved tribute to Bernard Kouchner, who left his post on 15 January, for his outstanding achievements and his efforts in favour of democratization and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We wish him the greatest success in the future and assure his successor, Mr. Hans Haekkerup, of our full support.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this important meeting. I also commend the efforts of the Singapore delegation.

I thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his detailed briefing. The Chinese delegation believes that the situation in Kosovo remains very disturbing, as reflected principally in the following four aspects.

First, the ethnic conflict in Kosovo has yet to see a fundamental change. Violence against and killing of members of ethnic minorities still occur from time to time. We note that the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kouchner, admitted before he left office that, since its establishment, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been unable effectively to guarantee the security of minorities, especially the Serbs. We believe that this is one of the principal reasons for the instability of the situation in Kosovo. Together with the

Kosovo Force, UNMIK should take effective measures to curb extremist ethnic forces, encourage all communities to live in harmony and improve the tense situation in Kosovo.

Secondly, the proposed elections for Kosovo are very worrisome. Some people are trying to politicize the elections. Many people on the ground also see the elections as a move towards independence for Kosovo, which would not only be in violation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), but would also have serious negative effects on the situation in the province. The Chinese delegation believes that resolution 1244 (1999) is very clear on the final status of Kosovo. UNMIK should step up its work to encourage the return of Serbs. Without the broad participation of Serbs, Turks and other minorities, the legitimacy of the elections will be in doubt.

Thirdly, with respect to cooperation between UNMIK and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, we welcome any step by UNMIK to enhance dialogue with the Yugoslav Government. We also welcome the mechanism for establishing dialogue. We hope that the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General will make progress in moving UNMIK to engage in constructive dialogue with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, because the appropriate settlement of the question of Kosovo hinges on the understanding support and cooperation of the Yugoslav Government.

Fourthly, as to the dialogue between Kosovo Albanians and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, UNMIK should actively encourage and guide the Kosovo Albanians to resume that dialogue and to seek a settlement satisfactory to all on a formula for substantial autonomy. The international community should exert a positive influence in this respect. Only when national harmony is finally restored to Kosovo and the rights and interests of all communities are ensured through legislation can the issue of Kosovo be decisively settled in a fair and reasonable manner.

I should also like to refer to the many recent reports by the international media on the extensive use by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of ordinance containing depleted uranium in the Balkans, which has harmed the health of innocent civilians and peacekeepers and damaged the environment. We note that all parties concerned, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the European Union and NATO, have indicated their intention to investigate the matter. We hope that such investigation will be conducted in a fair and independent manner, that the results will be made known to the public and that the necessary measures will be taken as soon as possible.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haekkerup, to his post. We note that, following his assumption of office, he issued cautious statements on the elections in Kosovo and that he is determined to make the creation of a secure environment for the return of Serbs and the fight against organized crime priorities in his work. This should indeed be a focus for UNMIK and we express our appreciation for it. We sincerely hope that, under Mr. Haekkerup's leadership, UNMIK will learn from the lessons of the past, truly fulfil its responsibilities mandated by the Security Council and comprehensively implement resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I offer special thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Guéhenno, for the information he has provided us. It is an important basis for the statement that we are about to make.

We also take this opportunity to congratulate all the members of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) for their achievements over the past 18 months. The appointment of Mr. Hans Haekkerup as Special Representative of the Secretary-General will help to maintain the proper course initiated by Mr. Bernard Kouchner. We trust that we will continue to see the same level of commitment and dedication in the work of UNMIK.

I should like to focus on five main points.

First, we would like to emphasize the important role that is being played by the new Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in finding a peaceful solution to the problems that we are dealing with today. We must continue to provide support to President Kostunica so that we can effectively contribute to the consolidation of strong institutions in that country.

It is only natural, therefore, that we should temporarily put on hold the strengthening of the Belgrade Government and avoid discussing, or taking decisions on, matters that are extremely sensitive for

the parties concerned. For example, it would be premature to decide, on the one hand, the date of general elections in Kosovo, and on the other, the definitive status of this province. It would be meaningless to move forward in these areas without the consent of Belgrade.

Secondly, we would like to say how important it is for UNMIK to continue working to protect all of the ethnic minorities. It is unacceptable that acts of violence are continuing to take place, such as the ones that occurred recently in the Presevo Valley and in Leposavic. The Albanian extremists must feel pressure from the international community to put an end to these attacks. We believe that political violence as a response to democratic changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must stop. UNMIK and the Kosovo Force should spare no effort in putting an end to these destabilizing factors, which could have repercussions in the rest of the region.

Thirdly, we feel that it would be appropriate for UNMIK and the Belgrade Government to come up with a joint solution to the problem of displaced persons and refugees. This could be an important step in generating confidence among the parties, in addition to directly benefiting the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Fourthly, let me note my Government's approval of the commitment of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to respect the provisions of the Military-Technical Agreement and of resolution 1244 (1999). Enhancing cooperation between Belgrade, UNMIK and KFOR is imperative in order to make progress towards finding a lasting solution to this question.

Fifthly, it is important that we review the situation in Kosovo in a much broader context. It would not be advisable to continue viewing each conflict in the Balkans as an isolated case, as this could further delay the achievement of a lasting solution fostered by mutual trust between all of the parties concerned.

I should like to conclude by briefly speaking about the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. To a large degree, the legitimacy and prestige of the Security Council and of the United Nations are at stake when it comes to the effectiveness of this Tribunal and its officers. Furthermore, the validity of international criminal law is also at stake. That is why we believe that the Security Council should do everything in its power to ensure that we achieve the objective for which the Tribunal was established.

Mr. Cooney (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for calling this open meeting today. Ireland associates itself fully with everything in the statement which will be delivered by Ambassador Schori of Sweden, as representative of the presidency of the European Union. I would like to take the opportunity of this meeting to highlight a number of issues which Ireland, as an incoming member of the Security Council, considers to be of particular significance.

Ireland acknowledges the combined efforts of the international community in relation to Kosovo. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been working closely with the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and other organizations to achieve the objectives laid out in Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Ireland is pleased that it has been able to contribute personnel to these important missions, and we salute all those who have served in Kosovo in the name of peace.

It is perhaps not inappropriate on this occasion to pay tribute to the personal contribution of Ambassador Holbrooke to the efforts of the international community in the western Balkans. Like him, Ireland looks forward to the peoples of this region joining us in what he described earlier today as a united Europe, whole and free.

We have studied with great interest the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, and we have listened with interest to the comprehensive briefing Mr. Guéhenno gave this morning, for which we would like to thank him. We welcome the progress made in Kosovo in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). With the help of the Mission, an interim administration has been successfully established, municipal elections have been held in a democratic and peaceful manner, and substantial reconstruction is under way. While certain objectives remain to be achieved, such as the UNMIK mine programme, aspects of the emergency

humanitarian assistance programme and implementation of the recommendations of the UNMIK Department of Justice, Ireland is pleased with the general progress made to date.

However, while the overall security situation has improved, we, like our partners in the European Union, are concerned about the ongoing ethnically and politically motivated violence in the Presevo Valley area of southern Serbia, and particularly in the ground safety zone. We strongly condemn the use of violence by armed groups, which endangers the overall security of the region. Ireland supports the efforts of UNMIK and KFOR in addressing the situation, including the recent arrest of presumed terrorists. Like the United Kingdom, we commend the sensible restraint shown by the Serbian and Yugoslav regular forces in the face of this situation, as well as the commitment of the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to respect the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military-Technical Agreement. We believe that full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) must remain the aim of the international community in Kosovo.

Ireland continues to be greatly concerned with the humanitarian situation in the region. It is essential that progress be made towards facilitating the return by Kosovo Serbs and others to their homes and reversing the effects of the wide-scale devastation in the region.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Bernard Kouchner, who has just completed his work as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNMIK. We are all grateful for the energy and determination which Mr. Kouchner brought to this extremely difficult job. We welcome Mr. Hans Haekkerup, who has now taken up duty in Kosovo, and offer him our full support.

Chief among Mr. Haekerrup's tasks will be establishing the legal framework for Kosovo-wide elections. While it is indeed desirable to proceed rapidly, we must be careful to ensure that certain objectives are met in advance: the results of the local elections must be fully implemented, and preparations must be completed in the areas of voter registration, education and information. Ireland has no doubt that Mr. Haekkerup will take account of these, and we appreciate the caution and desire for consultation he expressed when he was in New York last December.

I would, at this point, like to join our partners in the European Union and others in this Chamber in welcoming the programme of democratization in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia begun by President Kostunica. We have already declared our support for President Kostunica, following his victory in the elections last September. The outcome of the Serbian elections on 23 December last confirmed the choice of the democratic option. We are now beginning to see positive signs of the radical transformation initiated and maintained by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia. These combined changes have an effect not only on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but on the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. We urge the Governments concerned to continue working towards a peaceful settlement based on democratic principles and full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the equality of all citizens and national communities.

Of course, the resolution of the difficulties in Kosovo entails a lengthy process of reconciliation and rebuilding. It is important, therefore, that appropriate legal channels be found for the speedy release of Kosovar Albanian political prisoners, and that amnesty be put in place for those detainees who did not bear arms during the conflict in Kosovo.

I would like to mention the importance Ireland attaches to full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. It is essential that all parties to the conflict be treated equally and that indicted war criminals be brought to justice in an even-handed and fair manner. Trials under domestic law are important in coming to terms with the past, but they cannot replace trials in an international forum for certain specific offences.

I would like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for the information he gave us this morning in relation to depleted uranium. We share the view that it is important to establish the facts surrounding the use of depleted uranium in munitions in Kosovo, and its possible side-effects. It is essential that this issue be handled in a transparent way and the information emerging from the various surveys under way — including those to be carried out by the World Health Organization and UNMIK — be shared. This matter is of significance to both the local population and the international troops, observers and aid workers who have served and are serving there.

In conclusion, it is our view that an international presence will be necessary in Kosovo for some time.

We appreciate the excellent work being carried out by UNMIK in very difficult circumstances. I take this opportunity to assure the Council that Ireland will remain, politically and in practice, fully supportive of the efforts of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Neewoor (Mauritius): We appreciate the initiative to hold this open meeting to review the implementation of Security Council resolutions concerning the Balkans, and Kosovo in particular. We thank the Secretariat and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for the important briefing given to us this morning.

A number of very significant changes have taken place in the region during the past year. We have noted, above all, the successful democratization process in Yugoslavia, starting with the presidential election, which has brought about a change in the political set-up in Belgrade. With the election of Mr. Koštunica as the new President, Yugoslavia undoubtedly is moving towards stability and normalcy. The recent successful parliamentary election in the country is further evidence that the people of Yugoslavia are determined to close the tragic recent chapter of their history and chart a new and better future for themselves. We are particularly pleased that Yugoslavia has now resumed its membership in the United Nations. These positive developments will undoubtedly have a salutary impact all over the Balkans.

We also welcome the recent successful holding of municipal elections in Kosovo as an important step towards the establishment of a representative authority that should ultimately take charge of the administrative machinery, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

The United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) has done a valiant job in difficult circumstances in carrying out the mandate of resolution 1244 (1999). The out-going head of UNMIK, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, must be commended highly for this. We have no doubt that his successor, Mr. Hans Haekkerup, will do equally well in addressing the enormous challenges Kosovo presents to UNMIK, as he mentioned this morning. We assure him of our full support.

With regard to the people of Kosovo, we note with concern that an ethnic divide still persists and that many citizens of the two major communities are unable to return home and resume normal lives out of fear for their security. We know that wounds take time to heal, whether they be physical or emotional. But these are the same people who have in the past lived as good neighbours in multi-ethnic communities. We believe that is still possible, with a spirit of forgiving and forgetting on the part of all the people of Kosovo. There is hardly any nation today that is not multi-ethnic and where diverse communities share a common destiny in peace and harmony. There is no reason why Kosovo cannot do the same, provided it guards against falling into the trap of misguided political ventures.

Presently UNMIK and the Kosovo Force are serving as vital lifelines for the people of Kosovo by providing an essential administrative machinery and by promoting peace and reconciliation. We must not be oblivious of the fact that there has to be a lasting and peaceful solution to the present stalemate and that it is in the interest of all the people of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, to create the atmosphere for constructive dialogue to take place among them so as to determine the course they wish to take to ensure a better, peaceful and prosperous future for themselves. The international community must do all it can to encourage this process.

Finally, as members who have spoken before me have done, I wish to express concern about the possible presence of depleted uranium in various areas of Kosovo and the hazard that represents to people there. We encourage UNMIK to continue to address that issue very seriously.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Sweden. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Schori (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — as well as the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association countries of Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

First, the European Union would like once again to thank Mr. Bernard Kouchner for the remarkable work he has carried out over the past years in difficult circumstances, and to pledge our full support to Mr. Hans Haekkerup, the new Special Representative. I would also like to thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his rich bilingual report here today.

The European Union welcomes the progress made in Kosovo in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999) and fully supports the continued efforts of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to establish democratic, self-governing institutions in Kosovo in order to provide substantial autonomy for the people of Kosovo in accordance with that resolution.

The European Union also supports the efforts being made to increase dialogue and cooperation between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the relevant institutions of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and welcomes the democratic progress achieved in that country and in Serbia, most recently through the victory of the democratic forces in elections held in December. The European Union expects that this progress will enable essential political, economic and social reforms to be carried out within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which could also contribute to reducing tensions in Kosovo and the Presevo area of southern Serbia.

In this respect, the European Union reiterates its call on the Yugoslav and Serb authorities to find the appropriate legal channels for the speedy release of all Kosovo Albanian prisoners held on political grounds. Such a release could also constitute an important step towards the beginning of a dialogue between the representatives of Kosovo and Belgrade.

Action to combat violence and enhance the security situation for everyone in Kosovo should remain a top priority for UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR). It is deplorable that men, women and children in Kosovo continue to be killed because of their ethnic background and that moderate opinions expressed by politically engaged Kosovars can be dangerous to their safety.

The European Union vigorously condemns the use of violence, extremism and any act that makes coexistence among communities more difficult and that adversely affects regional stability. In this context, the EU encourages further confidence-building measures between the different ethnic communities in Kosovo and fully supports the right of all displaced people from Kosovo to return to their homes in peace, security and dignity.

An important aspect of enhancing the security situation in Kosovo is reducing the overall level of criminality and enforcing respect for the rule of law. To this end, more than 800 civilian police, as well as judges and prosecutors, from European Union member States are serving in Kosovo. The EU also supports the work of the Kosovo Police Service School to train local police and police trainers. Furthermore, EU member States remain the largest troop contributors to KFOR, which continues to play a crucial role in maintaining stability and security in Kosovo.

Another priority for the European Union is to contribute to the reconstruction and economic development of Kosovo. The EU is by far the single largest donor providing assistance to Kosovo and is at the forefront of the reconstruction effort. In this regard, the European Union believes that it is important to continue to create favourable conditions for the economic development of Kosovo through the establishment of viable and efficient economic structures, including in the fiscal area.

The European Union strongly condemns the violent action by ethnic Albanian armed groups in the Presevo area of southern Serbia and reiterates the call expressed in the statement of the President of the Security Council of 19 December 2000 for an immediate and complete cessation of violence in this area. The EU calls upon all involved to exercise maximum restraint and to resolve any differences exclusively through peaceful dialogue. The European Union welcomes specific measures taken by KFOR and UNMIK to address the problem, including increased surveillance of the administrative boundary.

The European Union also welcomes the commitment of the Yugoslav authorities to respect the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the military-technical Agreement and encourages the efforts to initiate confidence-building measures in order to stabilize the situation in the area.

In order to further contribute to stabilizing the situation, the European Union is currently undertaking efforts to increase its monitoring presence in the affected area.

Mr. Mladenovic (Yugoslavia): At the outset, I would like to wish you, Mr. President, and your country, as well as the other new non-permanent members of the Security Council, a successful and productive tenure. I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his very useful briefing.

The situation in and around Kosovo and Metohija, the autonomous province of the Yugoslav constituent Republic of Serbia, is characterized by two different features. On one hand, we have the international community, including the countries of the region, making efforts to stabilize the situation in the field pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Kumanovo military-technical Agreement. On the other hand, there are major security problems in the Ground Safety Zone in parts of the municipalities of Bujanovac, Medvedja and Presevo, brought about by the incursions of ethnic Albanian terrorists and their attacks on the peaceful local population and Yugoslav security forces, as well as serious security problems in many localities in Kosovo and Metohija itself. The latter throws a very dark shadow over the overall picture, so it is necessary for the Security Council to continue, in accordance with its responsibilities, to take even more active measures to overcome this situation.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continues to consider the calls made in the statement by the President of the Security Council of 19 December 2000 extremely relevant and expects them to be implemented in full and without delay. This relates in particular to the Council's calls for the immediate and complete cessation of violence in the Ground Safety Zone, for the dissolution of ethnic Albanian extremist groups and for the immediate withdrawal from the Ground Safety Zone of all those engaged in extremist activities.

Furthermore, my country's Government calls on the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to take more robust measures in controlling the administrative boundary in order to prevent terrorist incursions into the Ground Safety Zone, to stabilize the situation in it and to fulfil their other obligations under resolution 1244 (1999) and the Kumanovo military-technical Agreement.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia continues to be firmly committed to the quest for a solution to the present situation in the Ground Safety Zone, as well as for the comprehensive solution for Kosovo and Metohija, in a negotiated and peaceful way, proceeding from full respect for resolution 1244 (1999), as well as the obligations that the new Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its constituent Republic of Serbia have in ensuring the full protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

To stabilize the situation, the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has proposed that the Ground Safety Zone be either eliminated, narrowed or modified to put an end to the activities of ethnic Albanian terrorist groups. Bearing in mind the justifiability of this proposal, we expect that it will be given full support, and we are ready to negotiate the modalities of its implementation. Consultations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to that end have already begun.

Proceeding from its firm commitment to a negotiated solution, the Government of my country is convinced that it is possible to bring about a lasting peace only by abiding by democratic principles, by building confidence among all residents of Kosovo and Metohija and by developing a democratic society. For that, it will be necessary to provide a secure environment for all and to speed up the process of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons and the establishment of dialogue between the representatives of the Albanian community in Kosovo and Metohija and the new democratic authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia. I would like to add that the Government of the Republic of Serbia, with the assistance of the federal Government, is already making considerable efforts to integrate the entire population of the Ground Safety Zone into the institutions of the democratic civil society being built in our country.

Establishing better communications between the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia on the one hand, and UNMIK and KFOR on the other, will certainly be a major precondition in this regard. In that context, let me recall the readiness of my country to sign an agreement on the status of UNMIK with the United Nations.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Mr. Hans Haekkerup success in his future endeavours as the Special Representative for Kosovo and head of UNMIK in implementing resolution 1244 (1999). In this he will have my Government's full support.

The use of depleted uranium ammunition during the NATO intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has brought about ever more vocal protests world wide, which are entirely justified. Considering

that effects of radiation on people and the environment are not limited in space and time, the international community is duty-bound to take urgent and all necessary measures to forestall its harmful wide-scale consequences.

My Government insists that all the facts be established and, in particular, that all the consequences be eliminated with the full cooperation of all relevant international actors, including the Security Council. The responsibility for the use of those weapons should be borne by those who authorized them, regardless of whether they were or were not aware of their harmful effects.

As a victim of depleted uranium ammunitions, the consequences of which are not yet fully known, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has the right to be informed precisely and comprehensively of their use. This also implies the right to international assistance in establishing the facts regarding the effects of radiation and, in particular, in decontaminating the affected areas. Needless to say, the greatest share of assistance should be provided by those who authorized the use of the weapons. At the same time, we believe that the possibility should be considered, within the overall United Nations disarmament effort, of initiating international action towards establishing a regime to ban the production and use of those weapons. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is ready to render its full contribution in this regard and calls on all other States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to join it in achieving this goal.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Singapore.

First, I wish to join colleagues in thanking Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his clear and useful briefing.

The United Nations has been involved in Kosovo for almost 20 months, in one of its larger and more complex peacekeeping operations, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Much has been achieved during this period. Mr. Bernard Kouchner, who has just relinquished the leadership of UNMIK, has said that advances have been made in the provision of electricity, the refurbishment of hospitals and schools, the relaunching of the economy, the creation of a Kosovo police force and judiciary and the reconstruction of about 100,000 homes. I commend Mr. Kouchner and UNMIK for their efforts and achievements in rebuilding Kosovo from devastation.

However, much more needs to be done. Before spelling out what these tasks are, let me first take this opportunity to publicly convey my warm congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Hans Haekkerup as he takes up his new responsibilities at the helm of UNMIK. He has taken on an awesome burden.

The Singapore delegation has said before in this Chamber that the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo appear to be conceptually unsound. There does not appear to be a clear exit strategy for the United Nations. But there also does not seem to be a better alternative to UNMIK, considering the circumstances in which the United Nations became involved in Kosovo. We should not stray from the course at this critical juncture of change in the leadership of UNMIK. The United Nations involvement in Kosovo and the strict implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) must continue, despite the great difficulties we face.

Our overall aim must be to return Kosovo to normalcy. Kosovo cannot be allowed to languish in its present state for ever. In this regard, the uniqueness of UNMIK as a United Nations peacekeeping operation, like the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, stands out. UNMIK is an administration in every sense of the word, albeit an interim one. Like any administration, it is responsible for building — or, more correctly, rebuilding — Kosovo in all its aspects: security, socio-political, economic and others. It is important that, having begun such a major undertaking, the United Nations not terminate it prematurely. It is therefore essential that we be clear on our goals and ensure that we achieve them. At the same time, the United Nations must always be conscious of the need to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness in its administration and use of resources.

In our view, there are three critical areas which need to be addressed in Kosovo. The first is the security situation in and around Kosovo. The politically motivated violence against the Kosovar minorities has increased again after the municipal elections in October last year. This does not do anyone any good. It certainly does not help Kosovo to progress towards normalcy. Every effort must therefore be made to curb such violence. We call on all the Kosovar ethnic communities to put an end to the killing and

maiming. All those who engage in such activities should be dealt with severely. We therefore call on UNMIK and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) to step up their efforts to ensure the security of all the ethnic communities, in particular the minorities, and also bring the perpetrators to justice. The coordination of the activities of the UNMIK police and KFOR by the joint UNMIK-KFOR Political Violence Task Force is certainly a step in the right direction.

The conflict in the Presevo Valley, just outside Kosovo, must also not be allowed to fester. It has the potential to destabilize the region and undo all the good that has been done in Kosovo. All acts of violence in the Presevo Valley, especially by extremist groups, must cease. We welcome the recent arrest of nine members of the Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB) by KFOR close to the administrative border with Serbia. UNMIK and KFOR should take further necessary measures to address the problem. We also welcome the fact that the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and representatives of the affected communities have started a dialogue. This could facilitate a resolution of the problem in the Presevo Valley. We urge the two sides to continue this dialogue.

The second area is reconciliation among the Kosovar ethnic communities. Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) is clear on the political status of Kosovo. This issue should not be allowed to further divide Kosovo, given all the ramifications for the region. Instead, efforts should be made to reconcile the various ethnic groups in Kosovo. Of course, this is easier said than done. But if there is movement in the right direction, all ethnic groups could benefit.

Promoting ethnic tolerance is a key to bringing together all ethnic communities. A simple test would be the free return of minority refugees in large numbers to Kosovo. Until then, we hope that the security framework developed by UNMIK and KFOR will encourage minority refugees to come back to Kosovo.

We should also address the hard issues that impede reconciliation. All political prisoners should be released. The whereabouts of all missing persons in Kosovo should be revealed. The recent change in the leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia provides hope for the early release of political prisoners. We hope that the missing persons issue will be resolved soon.

The third area is building self-governance capacity and economic recovery for Kosovo. UNMIK's efforts to build the institutions and capability in Kosovo for self-governance should be commended and supported. All the ethnic communities in Kosovo should be involved in this important process towards self-governance. However, Kosovo-wide elections should be held only when the proper conditions are in place.

Efforts should also be made to spur economic development in Kosovo. Steps should be taken to increase trade with and investments in Kosovo, as this will generate a positive spiral and return Kosovo to normalcy. When the Kosovars taste the fruits of economic growth, they will be more predisposed towards having a peaceful, stable and secure environment to further build the economy.

Let me conclude by making one important point: we should be realistic. Kosovo's return to normalcy is likely to take several more years. The continued involvement of the United Nations and the international community in Kosovo, and their patience in addressing these three critical areas, will therefore be crucial.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Guéhenno to respond to the comments made.

Mr. Guéhenno: First, let me thank the Council for the warm support extended to the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. As I said in my briefing, the support of the Council is essential to the success of the Mission and I will convey to Mr. Hans Haekkerup the kind words that were extended to him.

I would like to address the two issues that were raised by Ambassador Gatilov. First, on the work that would be done in Bern on the institutional framework for Kosovo, we are not aware of that work and, indeed, we would welcome any information on it. Secondly, the report on Racak is not in our hands. We have never seen it. We have been in contact with the delegation of the Russian Federation and we have used our good offices with various institutions to get our hands on it. We will continue to pursue those efforts.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus

concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.